

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PEKING 01114 220406Z
ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
ICA-11 OMB-01 EB-08 DLOS-09 OES-07 /103 W
-----010734 220416Z /63

P 220320Z APR 78
FM USLO PEKING
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0496
INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMCONSUL NAHA
AMEMBASSY SEOUL
AMEMBASSY TAIPEI
AMEMBASSY TOKYO

C O N F I D E N T I A L PEKING 1114

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PBOR EFIS CH JA
SUBJ: CHINESE RESPONSE ON SENKAKUS INCIDENT

REF: TOKYO 6868, PEKING 1063

SUMMARY: CHINESE EXPLANATION OF SENKAKUS INCIDENT, GIVEN YESTERDAY TO JAPANESE POLCOUNS DONOWAKI, STUCK TO PREVIOUS STATEMENT THAT CHINESE FISHING BOATS WERE ENGAGED IN TRADITIONAL PURSUIT OF MIGRATORY FISH. JAPANESE EMBASSY FEELS EXPLANATION REFLECTS CHINESE DESIRE NOT TO PRESS SENKAKUS SOVEREIGNTY ISSUE AT THIS TIME AND THEIR HOPE DISPUTE WILL SIMPLY FADE AWAY. THEY WILL THEREFORE RECOMMEND THAT TOKYO ACCEPT CHINESE STATEMENT IN HOPES OF LIMITING DAMAGE TO SINO-JAPANESE RELATIONS, ALTHOUGH THEY REALIZE THAT MOVEMENT ON PFT IS NOW UNLIKELY FOR THE REST OF THIS YEAR.
END SUMMARY.

1. JAPANESE POLCOUNS DONAWAKI MET WITH FOREIGN MINISTRY ASIAN AFFAIRS DEPUTY DIRECTOR WANG HSIAO-YUN APRIL 21 IN EFFORT TO OBTAIN
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RESULTS OF CHINESE "INVESTIGATION" OF SENKAKUS INCIDENT PROMISED WEEK EARLIER. ACCORDING TO JAPANESE EMBOFF, WANG REITERATED FOR THE RECORD CHINESE POSITION THAT SENKAKUS BELONG TO PRC, THEN EXPLAINED INCIDENT WAS DUE TO CHINESE FISHERMEN FOLLOWING USUAL PRACTICE OF FOLLOWING MIGRATION OF FISH PAST SENKAKU WATERS. (THIS IS SAME STORY JAPANESE HAD RECEIVED LAST WEEK). WANG THEN WENT ON TO SAY THAT IN ANY CASE, CHINESE FELT THAT SENKAKUS

ISSUE SHOULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO INTERFERE WITH THE DEVELOPMENT OF FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN THE PRC AND JAPAN.

2. JAPANESE EMBASSY HERE FEELS THAT CHINESE FOREIGN MINISTRY IS MAKING SINCERE EFFORT TO PLAY DOWN ISSUE. EMBOFF NOTED, FOR INSTANCE, THAT WANG MADE NO EFFORT TO ARGUE CASE FOR CHINESE SOVEREIGNTY OTHER THAN INITIAL PRO FORMA STATEMENT BUT CONCENTRATED ON TRYING TO PROVIDE A PLAUSIBLE EXPLANATION FOR PRESENCE OF CHINESE BOATS INDEPENDENT OF SOVEREIGNTY QUESTION. EMBASSY THUS WILL APPARENTLY RECOMMEND TO TOKYO THAT JAPANESE ACCEPT CHINESE EXPLANATION AND NOT PURSUE THE MATTER FURTHER.

3. AT THE SAME TIME, EMBOFF ADMITTED THAT WANG'S STATEMENT DOES NOT ADEQUATELY EXPLAIN RECENT INCIDENT, SINCE JAPANESE HAVE NO EVIDENCE OF CHINESE FISHING IN THESE WATERS IN PREVIOUS YEARS. HE FEELS DECISION TO DISPATCH BOATS TO AREA WAS TAKEN WITHOUT KNOWLEDGE OF MFA, BUTTRESSING HIS VIEW BY REFERRING TO APPARENT CONFUSION AMONG LOW-LEVEL MFA OFFICIALS WHEN INCIDENT FIRST CAME TO LIGHT AND THEIR EVIDENT RELIEF AFTER KENG PIAO STATEMENT OF APRIL 15 PROVIDED THEM WITH A RESPONSE TO JAPANESE INQUIRIES.

4. EMBOFF SAID JAPANESE DO NOT INTEND TO ASK CHINESE FOR FURTHER EXPLANATIONS OR ASSURANCES, AND HOPE THE ISSUE WILL DIE DOWN IN NEXT FEW WEEKS. HE IS UNDER NO ILLUSION, HOWEVER, AS TO THE DAMAGE DONE TO PFT PROSPECTS, AND DOES NOT EXPECT THAT SONODA WILL BE ABLE TO VISIT PEKING UNTIL AFTER THE JAPANESE ELECTIONS AT THE END

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OF THIS YEAR. ASKED IF CHINESE WOULD BE TOLERANT OF THIS FURTHER DELAY IN TREATY NEGOTIATIONS, HE SAID HE BELIEVED THEY WOULD, SINCE THEY MUST BE AWARE OF THE EFFECT THE SENKAKUS AFFAIR HAS HAD ON JAPANESE PUBLIC OPINION.

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